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ABSTRACT

This document contains 51 poems, essays, and short stories that were authored by adult student writers throughout Ohio. The works were selected from 130 pieces of writing submitted by the students of 51 adult basic and literacy education (ABLE) teachers who encouraged their submission for presentation at the first Ohio Literacy Resource Conference. The works are grouped by the following themes: family; nature; love; mixed bag; and life. Within those broad categories, a range of topics, viewpoints, and moods are represented. Among the pieces of writing included are the following: a mother's story of life with a daughter born with Klippel-Feil syndrome; an essay on housecleaning; a poem to a child at the time of his high school graduation; haiku; love poems; a tale of an American Indian girl who lived a long time ago; a story in which the author assumes the viewpoint of a slave; an essay on what makes a good leader; an essay on a Vietnamese city; an essay about Bill Clinton written by a Japanese immigrant; a student's recollections of life in the 1920s and 1930s; and a firsthand account of enrolling in ABLE. A list of teaching ideas for the booklet is included. (MN)

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Publication

Ohio Writers Conference

The Ohio Literacy Resource Center

May 1, 1998

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Foreword

We at the Ohio Literacy Resource Center are very pleased to introduce Beginnings. This publication is a first step in honoring and supporting adult student writers in Ohio. It takes a place with other OLRC projects for students and teachers such as Recommended Trade Books for readers and The Math Newsletter and statewide math day for those interested in math.

The Regional ABLE Resource Centers and the Ohio Literacy Network helped us obtain over 130 pieces of writing. Staff and students selected the 51 entries that are included. Fifty-two teachers encouraged students to submit poems, essays and stories. These adult student writers and their teachers were invited to the first OLRC Writers' Conference on May 1, 1998 in Columbus.

Many people contributed their effort to this project. Jim Bowling, Assistant Director in the Division of Vocational and Adult Education at the Ohio Department of Education, made funding possible. Jean Stephens, Director of the Ohio Literacy Resource Center, encouraged us at every step and served as a reader. Nancy Padak, Kent State University faculty, contributed her constant inspiration and her reading and editing expertise. Bryan Bardine provided the perspiration involved in overseeing the entire project, which was coordinated by Connie Sapin. Gale Coleman and Carmen Parfitt of Ravenna served as representative readers for ABLE students. Georgia Gallagher made the publication beautiful. Student staff helped us all.

Beginnings is for readers. Beginnings is for writers. Beginnings is for teachers. We hope you enjoy it.

SEE PAGE 77 FOR INTERNET SITE AND ORDERING INFORMATION.

Family

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Grandma's Girl

Bright, intelligent girl
Runs and giggles with joy
Interesting to talk to
Tender but tough
Teases and taunts the little boys
Angelic at times
Naive but knowledgeable
You have to love her if you know her

by Norma King

Brittany

Brittany is a bundle of joy, despite the fact that she was born with Klippel-Feil Syndrome. This syndrome is characterized by a short and wide neck, low hairline, reduction in the number of cervical vertebrae, and fusion of the cervical spine. In order to turn her head in any direction, she has to turn her whole body. Klippel-Feil Syndrome can cause many medical problems. In Brittany's case she was born with holes in her heart, so at five months, she had open heart surgery. During her two week stay in the intensive coronary care unit, she actually died when they took her off the respirator. They doctors shocked her heart into beating again and put her back on the respirator. In all, Brittany was in the hospital twelve weeks.

When she came home, she had to be on oxygen; we made many trips to the hospital and doctors. The only times Brittany cried was when the medical staff stuck her with needles. She had a wonderful attitude during these trying times and always wore a smile. When she was 8 months old and done eating, she would take the washcloth, wipe her mouth and each of her hands, and then wipe the tray clean.

Brittany was never able to crawl because one arm was shorter than the other because of the way her spine was curved, so she learned to walk pretty quickly. She had therapy to strengthen her limbs.

Now Brittany is six years old and only weighs 28 pounds. She celebrated her birthday when she was in the hospital for another surgery. Even though she is in a body cast right now, she is a bundle of dynamite. The doctors had to do some surgery on her back and neck because she was growing to the side and her ear was on her shoulder. They first put her in a body cast with a halo on her head, but the screw on the right side was pulling loose. She is presently in a body cast that covers her head except for her face, ears, and the top of her head, from which hangs a little ponytail.

Brittany laughs, runs, and always participates in interesting conversations because she is full of life and loves people. Her favorite song is "God Loves People More than Anything."

Everyone who knows Brittany loves her!

by Norma King

Remember My Great Grandmother

Just sitting here remembering how strong her hands were. The way she would rub our faces with Vaseline before we went to school.

Just sitting here remembering the words she spoke. "You have to give respect to receive respect. If you don't start nothing, it won't be nothing." How could one forget those words?

Just sitting her remembering how smart she was. When she would tell us to stick together, don't give up on each other, stay independent. She would also say, "If you ever have children, love them. Don't give up on them, no matter what happens."

Just sitting here honoring her for the way she raised my brothers, me, my cousins, even children that were outside the family. Just honoring what a wonderful woman she is.

by Lakisha Harris

A Friend

A friend is one of the nicest things you can have, and one of the nicest things you can be.
A friend is a living treasure, and if you have one, you have one of the most valuable gifts in life.
A friend is one who will always be beside you through all the laughter, and through each and every tear.
A friend is the one thing you can always rely on, the someone you can always open up to, the one wonderful person who always believes in you in a way no one else seems to.
A friend is a sanctuary.
A friend is a smile.
A friend is a hand that is always holding yours, no matter where you are,
No matter how close or far apart you may be.
A friend is someone who is always there and will always care.
A friend is a feeling of forever in the heart.
A friend is the door that is always open.
A friend is the one to whom you can give your key.
A friend is one of the nicest things you can have and one of the best things you can be.

by Trina Hall

Housecleaning

I always like housecleaning, but this time I am going to enjoy it even more. I am going to clean my house differently, today. I am going to remove some things and some people out of my house. As you know, I like my things clean.

Where do I start cleaning? I have a son that is fourteen years old. Now, I am going to sweep and mop my floors. I'll sweep him out of my door. Then I'll put something sticky on the floor, so he can't walk on me any more.

I have a teenage daughter who is out of control. She stays in trouble all the time. I am cleaning up my kitchen and washing dishes. I need to remove some things, but I need my daughter's help. I am running my water and putting soap in it. I am standing here washing my dishes. Oh no, she fell into my water! Her mouth got washed out with soap. What is this? Her long hair got tangled up in my dishes. I am trying to find her, so I let out my water, but she is not here. She went down the sink. My daughter won't give me any more problems because she can't find her way home. She is a long way from home now.

I have a friend that I would like to clean out of my house, too. I am going to clean up my living room now. He is like dust; he is on everything. I am cleaning the dust off of my tables and my T.V. I am using an old rag. When I get done cleaning this room, I am going to put that old rag in my car and take it far away from my house. That dust will not get back in my house and get on my children.

I have been married for ten years, but we have been together for twenty years in all. Now, I am starting to clean my bedroom. My bedroom is a mess, and I do not know where to start or how to clean it. I could make him up in my bed, or shut him off like I do the T.V. No, I think I will wash him and put him on my shelf. That way I can bring him down and play with him from time to time. This way I will still have a good husband, his money, and have someone to play and talk with from time to time.

I do not know how you would clean up your house, but this is how I would clean my house.

P.S. I wish it could be this easy!

by Brenda Kedigh

Daddy, Mommy and Child

We were in love.
You were everything to me.
You said I looked like a dove.
I never thought you would leave.

You gave me a life
But not my own.
She is such a sight,
And you left her alone.

She will grow up in the real world
Knowing what was said and done.
After all she is a little girl
And deserves to have a little fun.

She will ask why you're not there,
And I will have to tell her why--
That you don't and never will care
And she will probably cry.

To her you may be gone,
But through her
and in her
you will live on.

Your mom caused it.
And your daughter will grow up.
What happened she will know it,
And to you she will never look up.

You don't know what she cost
Or what you've done.
You don't know what you've lost
Because you're too dumb.

The reason we are through
Is because you weren't true
To two girls
Who trusted you.

Now we move on
And leave you behind.
To you we are so cruel
Because to us you were never kind.

by Amanda Burroughs

Dedicated to Victoria Baker

The First Man in My Life

I always think about him, with his beautiful smile, his soft voice, and his humble attitude, especially when the snow is falling softly on the ground. He wished he could see snow, but he never had the chance. He had gray eyes and white hair. He was tall, well built, very fair, and his face was covered with freckles. You could see the wisdom in his face. His face showed that he went through a life full of happy and sad days. He had his share of joy and sorrow. He lost both his parents when he was a small child. His father died in the war, and his mother passed away shortly after. He was raised by his brother.

He grew up in Egypt. He finished only fourth grade and worked at many different jobs. First he worked as a carpenter. Later, he started selling sheep and camels between Egypt and Libya. Then he changed his business and started importing fabric from China. After that he developed a big business in sewing fine fabrics. His company became the best in its field.

As was the custom in my home country at that time, he had two wives. They gave him great joy and a large loving family. This wonderful man I am telling you about was my beloved father. He possessed all the wonderful qualities anyone could wish for in a parent. He was the father of twenty-three children. I was number fifteen. When I was born, he was about fifty-years-old.

I remember him being a kind and loving person. He took great pleasure in helping his extended family and the community around him. He donated money to build a mosque, he opened his home to the needy, and he supported education in many ways.

Even though he only finished fourth grade, he loved books and education, and he always encouraged and pushed us to finish our college education. I remember him often telling us that the world respects only educated people. His love of education was really amazing. He believed that if people are educated there will be no hate or greed, and everyone will be nice to each other. I remember him encouraging people to have parent group organization meetings for school in his own house.

Despite the fact that I had to share him with all the people around him I developed a beautiful relationship with him. He loved literature, politics, and history. From him I got my love of

reading. I was named after the character Shahrazad in a book he loved, *A Thousand and One Nights*. He used to ask me to read to him all the time. It was a special thing to me. I loved it, and it was a give-and-take situation. He got to listen to a story or a poem, and I got to practice my reading. He used to call me "the educated one." And when I would finish reading to him, he would recite a line from *A Thousand and One Nights*, the book I got my name from, "And Shahrazad perceived the dawn of day and ceased to say her permitted say."

I remember a very happy childhood and adolescence. But a wave disturbed the calm water. My oldest brother, Hussein, was very dear to me. He was like a second father. When I was eighteen, Hussein went on a car trip one day to attend a funeral. He never came back alive. He was to take over as the head of the family. His loss was the saddest moment in our family's life. That event really changed my perspective on life, and it was a great tragedy for my father. After that we didn't sit and read anymore.

In the summer of 1994, I left my country with my husband and my son and came to America. That was the last day I saw my father. On January 3, 1995, my father passed away. He was seventy-seven years old. I didn't have the chance to see him and embrace him and say goodbye to him. It was a very painful experience for me, but I keep telling myself I have all these beautiful memories of him, and I can carry on his beliefs of a happy and safe world.

Now I have a wonderful husband and two kids of my own. I enjoy playing with my kids in the Ohio snow, sledding and throwing snowballs at each other. While we play, I think how wonderful it is to carry on the dream of someone I love so much. I hope one day my kids will remember me and their father the way I remember my father.

by Shahrazad Kablan

To My Oldest Son on His Graduation

FEBRUARY 8, 1998

To my son Jason,

The time has come for you to graduate from high school. I would like to tell you how proud I am of you. I was very young when you were born. I didn't graduate from high school like I truly wanted. I had trouble in school, and it was very hard for me. When you had trouble in school I was right there to see that you got the help you needed.

Just look at you today! You are a 4.0 student and on your way to college. I am so glad that you are doing the things that I wanted to do so badly myself.

When I see you walk across the stage to get your diploma, I will be the happiest and proudest mother on earth.

It will make me take the time to work even harder to get my G.E.D. With that, I can be as proud of myself as I am of you.

With love always,

Mom

by Tina M. Shawbell

A True Friend

One of my best friends is an eight-year-old, black and tan, very fat dachshund named B.J. We have had her since she was a puppy, and she has become a very important part of our family. She has developed her own personality and can communicate her feelings very well with little looks and actions. My dog loves me unconditionally and is very loyal and protective. She is also an endless source of entertainment.

Being the lovable animal that she is, B.J. likes nothing more than to curl up with me and let me know how much she cares for me. If I've had a bad day, she is there for me. Listening to my problems and kissing my troubles away is one of her specialties. No matter what I have done or what mistakes I have made, she doesn't care. She loves me!

My dog is a very loyal and protective friend. Late one night, when I was alone, someone tried to break into my house. However, B.J. was on guard duty and warned me by barking loudly and frantically. The man yelled at her to "shut up," then turned and ran away. B.J. was my hero that night.

My friend B.J. is also quite the entertainer. She loves to play, sing, and dance. There are many games she loves to play. Games such as, "Chase the Remote Control Cars," "Fetch the Squeak Toy," and "Rub My Belly" are favorites. All of these are played with a wagging tail and a big smile on her face. Yes, dogs can smile!! She also sings a beautiful "I Love You" song and is a very talented dancer.

Dogs are wonderful friends, and mine is one of the best. She may not be able to do some of the things my human friends can do but she is loving, loyal, and fun. She makes our lives more complete, and no other animal could ever take her place. B.J. is a true friend.

by Wanda Kandel

An Important Person

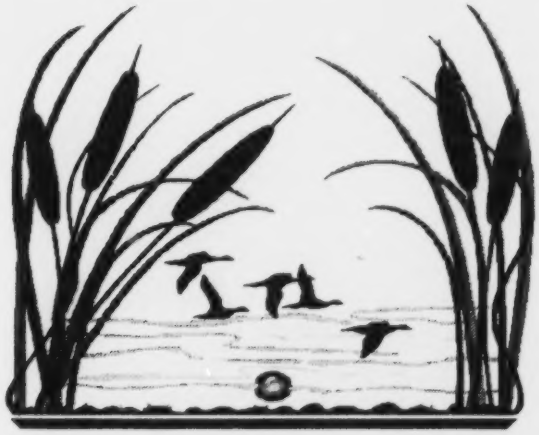
There was an important person in my life - my grandmother. She was the greatest person I have ever known. She took care of me at age five years old, when I lost my mother. I don't remember a great deal about my mother, but my grandmother would sit and tell me things about her. My grandmother said she would play, sing, rock us to sleep, and feed us before she would eat. My mother wanted us to be fed first, my grandmother said.

My grandmother did her best with her five grandchildren. We had to mind her and listen to her. She had her hands full with us five children. We would work on the farm, helping out with what we could do. The oldest ones would do more than me, for I was the youngest child. As I got older, I would help my grandmother milk the cow. I loved to help her milk. My grandmother gave me a white calf, and I had to take care of my calf.

Yes, I know my grandmother was the greatest to us, but I'm sure there are other children who had no mother at age five, and I'm sure they were taken care of. I'm sure they were sung to, rocked, played with, loved, fed, and taken care of the very best, and also were told about their real mothers.

by Kathryn L. Yaden

Nature



Dancing in the Wind

Stepping upon a stone, making it her
throne, all dressed in a long silver gown
trimmed in lace.

The March wind forms hands that reach
beneath her golden hair sending each curl
dancing wildly.

The clouds now become her domain. Soft as a feather she
dances, feet waltzing, carrying light upon her wings.

Sweet smell of freedom… A smile takes form on her lips.
Tips of fingers gently caress
each passing cloud.

Silently with sunrise she opens her eyes, a soft whisper,
wake...from dancing in the wind.

by Martha A. Grant

A Cinquain and Haiku from the Live Oaks ABLE class (A.M.) The students that wrote these poems did it together. All the students are studying for their GED.

****

Rabbit

Rabbit
Soft, fuzzy fur
Jumping, Multiplying
Twitching quieted animal
Magic

Life

Attaining a goal
Accomplishing a life dream
Feeling excited!!

by Amanda Baker, David Lewis,
Autumn Schmidt, Emma Centers,
Nora Shaou

White Feather

A long time ago lived a little girl named White Feather who lived in an Indian village. Her father was the chief of the Cherokee tribe. Two other tribes, the Chickasaw and the Miami, lived near by. Although the three tribes didn't get along, when trouble arose they would try to help one another.

One day White Feather's mom told her to go out and play. She went out to play with the other children in the village. They were running until the boys and girls decided to climb a small hill. White Feather would not climb because she was afraid of falling. She said, "I'm going home."

But she didn't go home. She sat down under a tree and she watched the other children. All of a sudden she saw a beautiful eagle flying through the sky. The bird was so graceful in flight. White Feather forgot about the other children playing. She was caught up in the birds flying. White Feather said to herself, "I wish I could fly like the mighty eagle." Then two of the children came down the hill and told her to quit daydreaming. White Feather and the rest of the children went back to the village because it was getting late.

The next day White Feather was told to watch their sheep. Two of the sheep had wandered off up into the hills. White Feather knew that she was responsible for the sheep. She knew she would have to climb the hills to get the sheep and bring them back down. She began to climb up into the hills telling herself all the way up that "I won't fall if I don't look down."

Half way up the hill she heard birds chirping. She turned her head to look. When she did, she saw two beautiful birds in flight. She forgot about the sheep, and she just watched the birds. All of a sudden she slipped and fell. She was not thinking when she put her arms out like the great eagle. All of a sudden she turned into a beautiful white bird. She began to soar and fly around the Indian villages. She flew toward her village and landed a few feet from the village.

When she landed on the ground, she turned back into a little girl. She had to rest for awhile before she could walk back to her teepee. When she got there, her dad was waiting. He was very upset with her. He said to her, "I gave you a small job to do. And did you do it? You ran off to play instead of watching the sheep. Now there are two missing. We depend on our sheep for food as well as for clothing."

White Feather said, "Dad, you don't understand. I was going up into the hills to get the two sheep that wandered off, when all of a

sudden I fell. Then something amazing happened. I turned into a bird and I began to fly. I flew all around the villages."

Her father said, "That will be enough. Do you want the other children and villagers to make fun of you? I will never hear this spoken of again."

The following day White Feather did all of her chores and headed to the hills. When she began to climb to the middle, she turned and spread her arms. Then she jumped and automatically she turned into that white beautiful bird. She began to fly and soar around the mountains and the hills. She flew low to the ground. Then all of a sudden she saw wagons. Horses and cows were pulling the wagons and settlers. They seemed to come out of nowhere. She hadn't seen such things before. She flew toward her village and landed on the ground. She rested for awhile. When she got her strength back, she ran to her teepee. Her father asked, "What are you doing?"

She said, "I've seen something, something I've never seen before. Please Dad, come with me and I'll show you." Her father said, "White Feather I have no time for your games today." White Feather said, "But Dad, this is not a game. It is something that I think is very important." Her father told her to go play.

She went to her mother and asked her mother to go with her to see the amazing thing. So her mother and White Feather got two horses and rode them to the tall grasses. Her mother asked, "How much farther is it?" White Feather said, "It's right up here Mom." They rode a few more feet and all of a sudden White Feather's mother saw the settlers and their wagons.

Mother grabbed White Feather's hand and said, "Let's hurry back to our village." White Feather had never seen her mother act like this before. She seemed afraid. They rode so fast that White Feather could hardly get her breath.

When they got back to the village, mother jumped off the horse. She went running and yelling for her husband. She began to tell him about the settlers and wagons coming into their valley. White Feather's father got some of the other Indians together. They rode up to the tall grass to see what his wife was talking about. When they got to the tall grass they could see the settlers and wagons.

When the Indian chief got back to the village be called a meeting of all the tribes. At the meeting he told them about the settlers that had come into their valley. The Indians began to ask one another if the settlers were peaceful or if they had come to take their land. So the chief of each tribe sent out warriors to watch the settlers.

White Feather decided to do her own watching. She became the beautiful white bird again. She began to soar and fly around the settlers to watch the women walk in their long dresses with bonnets on their heads. She did not know what they were saying since their language was foreign to her. But she loved to watch them walk and to look at their trinkets. Over time she learned some of their language.

One day she heard the settlers talking about the Indian tribes and how they needed their lands. She flew home. She went to her father. She told him the words the settlers had said. She hoped her dad would know what they meant. Her dad went to the elders, and he began to tell them what his daughter had heard. He asked them if they knew what the words meant. One elder spoke up. He said,
"I understand the settlers' words, because I heard them as a child."
The elder told the chief it was very bad news. He told him they had two choices. They could stay and fight the settlers, or they could go and search for another place to live.

The chief called a meeting of all the tribes. He told them about what the settlers' plans were. The Indians had to decide what to do. The chief told them that he was taking his tribe and finding another place to live. But the other two tribes decided to stay and fight.

White Feather went to her father and told him that she would become a bird again. She would fly to find them a new valley to live in. Her father told her, "White Feather, what am I going to do with you?"

White Feather said, "But Dad, how do you think I knew about the settlers and their plans to take our land?" Her father stood there looking at her. And she said, "If you don't believe me, come with me and I'll show you." White Feather began to go into the mountains. Her father went up the mountains with her when all of a sudden White Feather spread her arms and jumped off the mountain. He watched as his young daughter turned into a beautiful white bird. Then she flew to the ground and waited for her father to come down the mountain.

When he got down to the bottom of the mountain he saw his daughter sitting there. White Feather said to her father, "Now do you believe me?"

Her father said, "Yes, I believe you. I don't understand how you did what you did. But I'm sure it had something to do with our gods."

So White Feather said to her father, "Will you let me fly to find a new valley for us to live in?" Her father agreed to let her fly to find a new valley to live in. White Feather went back up the mountain. She turned into a bird, and she flew away. Her father went back to the village and told his wife and the rest of the tribe to pack.

White Feather had flown for a day and half when she came upon a valley that was different than theirs. It had water running down the mountain side, beautiful waters and big tall trees. It seemed to be the perfect place for their new home. White Feather flew home and told her father of the valley. It was a good thing that White Feather had come home at that time. The settlers were beginning to fight the Indians. White Feather turned into a beautiful bird again. Her father told the village to hurry. They were leaving.

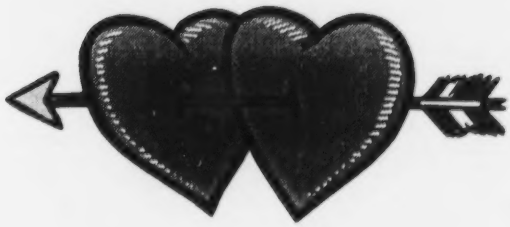
They followed White Feather up the mountain. They looked back at their valley. They could hear the noise of the settlers' guns. They could see the other Indian villages burning. White Feather's father turned and led his tribe down the other side of the mountain. They had walked for many days when they came upon the water running down a mountain side. They stopped to rest by the mountain. White Feather flew down beside her father. She turned back into a little girl. Her father asked how much farther to the new valley. White Feather said, "I will show you. It is right up here."

White Feather started up the mountain with her father and the rest of her tribe. They got partially up the mountain when White Feather moved toward the water. They went under the water. There under the water it was like a cave. She led them through the cave to the other side. On the other side was the beautiful valley in which they would make their new home.

They were very happy in their new valley. White Feather lived out the rest of her life in the new valley.

by Bonnie Edwards

Love



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I Love You

I want you for myself,
don't want to share you with anybody else,
I want to touch your body,
feel your arm around me.

I want to be your fantasy,
your dream come true.
I want to need your lovin',
make you my only one.

I want you satisfied.
Anything your heart desires,
let my heart provide.

Until I feel your heartbeat next to mine,
I've got work to do
'Til every star up in the sky
knows that I love you.

by Kelly Anderson

My Heart Controls My Mind

My knees start to shake
when you're in sight.
My mind is filled with wonder,
my heart with fright.

Will this feeling ever stop?
When did it start?
How can I listen to my mind
without breaking my heart?

I'm so confused.
What should I do?
I can't think of anything,
except you.

Should I ignore you?
Or just give you this time?
I can't think straight.
My heart controls my mind.

by Kelly Anderson

Valentines are Many Things

Valentines are many things:
A nice, friendly smile,
Lots of sweethearts.
Everyone has a friend.
Never be sad.
Thousand kisses for a lovely person,
It's a flower or a teddy bear.
Name of a saint.
Enough love for friends;
Some people give special gifts.

by Bilijana Batkovic

Come Back!

You only came to visit.
I really wished you'd stay.
You only made me want you more,
then moved along your way.

The warmth and splendor of your touch
put music in the air.
The flowers that you brought me
promised that you care.

You teased me and you flirted.
You had your little fling,
Then disappeared and left me cold.
Hurry back! I miss you, Spring!

by Janet A. Brinkman

Volleys of Music Resound Everywhere

Volleys of music resound everywhere.
Airy kisses are everywhere.
Love, flowers, and sweets for you,
Enjoyment, entertainment for you.
Nice to meet you, nice to
Think about you.
I love you.
Noisy, joyful holiday.
Exuberance of sweethearts are
Signs of happiness and love.

by Irina Egorova

The Past

Every time I walk forward, there is a shadow that haunts me.
The name that lingers with me seems to have an eye on the past.
Every time I see you, you don't see me - feeling embedded like a flower with no sprouts, but the seed.

Meadows with a glow of heavenly essence, lighted with the sun and the cool breeze...with me there is a tint of darkness as the rain comes near.
When the moon is bright, so clearly the stars glow...with me the moon is dull and the stars have faded.

The resolution I wish for is you to stand by me with no doubts and no fears.
With my luck, there is no resolution, only doubts and fears.

Love is an obstacle of shame and bitterness. Everyone who knows me, male, leaves me nothing but the past.
Seeing the future is hard, but seeing the past is not hard.
Love is sweet, sincere, and comforting....in my eyes I see grief, sorrow, and tears.

When the phone rings it is sweetness to the ears....in my eyes it's loneliness with a dull ring. Sorry, I forgot our date.

Love is granted with three wishes from the wishing well...in my eyes there is only one - And that is the past.

by Cindy Lanum

Remembering You

I'll never need reminders of you.
Does one forget the morning dew?
Its sparkle when kissed by the rising sun?
The freshness it gives to a day just begun?

Does one need to be reminded of
the gentle flutter of the wings on a dove?
You tell me the yellow of flowers sent
will help keep the memory of you permanent.

Could I ever forget your smile
or how wonderful it is being with you for a
while?
Do you think anything could ever erase
the heart-warming memory I have of your
face?
Could anything possibly hold more bliss
than the incredible memory I have of your
kiss?
You've given to me much more than you know.
Do flowers, when nurtured by Heaven's rain,
forget to grow?

by Elizabeth K. Pierce

You Are The Light of My Life

The universe creeps within me.
It's inside my eyes.
It's got me hypnotized into life.
Shine your light so I may find
the path that's right.

by Mike Wargo

I Asked Jesus

I asked Jesus,
"How much do
You love me?"
"This much,"
He answered.
Then He stretched
out His arms
and died.

by Pearl Randolph

I Can't Seem To

I can't seem to get past the feeling
of an emptiness of a love that once was,
and is now, no more!

I can't seem to fight the fear of moving
forward, and seeking a new purpose, and
another identity in my life.

I can't seem to let go of the
past, of things lost, of the sadness, of
a loss of what once was.

I can't seem to stand on my own
two feet, and stand alone.

by Karen S. Smith

Lost Souls

My heart aches with such pain.
I can feel it break, I hear it crack.
The endless torture of forbidden love
So sweet with bitter bite.

I reach into the abyss of lost emotion
Only to find darkness of rejection.
I ask, "Why?"
No answer from my lonely heart.

I miss the way we used to be
Lost in the river of memories.
Drowning in the tides of love.
Rescue me from my past!

Help my heart to feel again.
Wake my dreamless emotions from their forever slumbers.
Let me live with purpose.
Let me walk through the graves of the past, without falling.

My heart is suffering a fate worse than death:
A life without your love.
Please realize my dreams, catch my fall.
Wrap me in the serenity of your touch.

The incessant torture of my emotions kill my dreams.
Just love me, just care.
One word of love, one glance of sensitivity
Would save my lost soul.

My fate lies within the chambers of your soul.
Wake me from my nightmares with never-ending love.
I love you.

by Kathyrn Tipton

Love

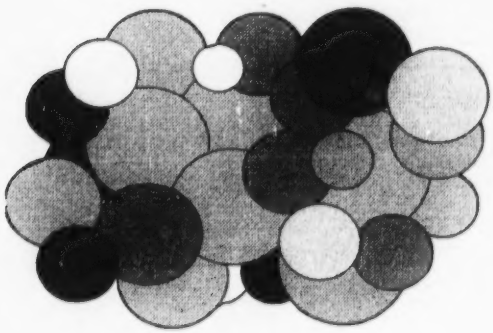
Love is like a traffic light.
You never know when it's gonna change.
When you see green, go ahead and continue doing what you're doing,
Because your relationship's in good shape.

When you see yellow, slow down and take safety measures,
So your relationship will be secure and you don't end up at the Stop light before you want to.

When you see red, stop and find time for you and your partner
To talk and think about what's going wrong in your relationship,
Before it crashes and somebody ends up seriously hurt.

by Shana Trent

Mixed Bag



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Fire

A little flame starts below;
then it all starts to show.
The flames are climbing,
the heat is rising.

Smoke fills the room,
it fills my throat.
The walls are black
and some are gone.

My room is cold
after the heat is gone.
The flames are falling,
the water is spouting.

There's nothing left,
except me and my mom.
The house is nothing more
than a pile of ashes.

But I'm thankful that my mom is alive,
Because without her I wouldn't survive.

by Kelly Anderson

The Eternal Light Of Christmas

Search me, O Lord,
And show me your eternal light
To follow you through this Christmas season
So I may show others
The way to follow your son
Through the light of the star
That shined that bright Christmas night.

Born in a cave, in lowly manger.
There was no room in the inn.
Mary and Joseph watch their babe
Sleep, hush in a lowly manger.

The star that shone up above
So bright that night.
The angels sang, Gloria-in-ex-cel-sis-De-o,
Announcing the birth of God's son.

The shepherds were frightened
When the angels came singing;
Gloria-in-ex-cei-sis-De-o
Glory to God, Peace on Earth.

O, how I am so glad that Christ was born
And bore my sins on the cross of Calvary
So that I might be saved.

by Nancy Clapper

My Hobby

Target shooting is a hobby I derive a great deal of enjoyment and fulfillment from. I started out a plinker (shooting at cans and bottles). Then, later on in years, a new friend introduced me to bullseye shooting.

Bullseye shooting demands far more precision; it is, in fact, a science, proven over the years by the best shooters in the art of marksmanship. There are four qualifications in shooting: marksman, sharpshooter, expert, and master. Coordinating gun indexing with trigger release is the essence of marksmanship. One must be able to release the sear pin without disturbing the sight alignment. The sear pin also is called a firing pin. When I am preparing for a bullseye match, I sit quietly and go over in my mind what I must do to accomplish my goal, which is a master score in a bullseye shooting.

Finally, bullseye shooting is a sport that I enjoy. Seeing myself making progress gives me a sense of fulfillment.

by Wendell Clements

Blanket So Sweet

If I was an inanimate object
when I woke up, I'd have to say
it would be my kids' blanket.
That is what I'd be.

I am a big blue blanket.
I'm fuzzy and soft.
I have little hearts all over me.
I'm like a comforter, big and soft.

I wrap myself around
kids when they nap.
They sleep so safe 'cause I'm
warm like that.

I get to go on vacations
and maybe even lay on the grass.
But some people just hold me
just to cover their laps.

Well this is why I'm a
blanket -- so sweet, soft, and warm.
So think of me when you have
to bundle up when the weather is unsure.

by Robin Jones

Fleeing To Freedom

This story originated when the Margaret Guy and her basic literacy tutor, Tom Traughwein, were studying during Black History Month. The team had been reading stories about African American women that had local historical significance. A series of articles ran during Black History Month in the Dayton Daily News. One research article was about former slave, Eliza Harris. Margaret and Tom built their lessons that week around these articles. Margaret's assignment was to write a story putting herself in the place of Eliza Harris. The result is the following story ***Fleeing to Freedom****.*

Fleeing To Freedom

My name is Eliza Harris. I was a young indoor slave woman who had a husband and six kids. My master was broke, and I was about to be sold.

I knew if I was sold it would take me and my children farther South, and it would be harder to escape. I had to plan for my two-year-old daughter, too.

I had to think about warm clothing and food and how I could get away before I was missed. I had ten miles to go and a river to cross before I could be free.

We ran and ran. I was tired but I knew I had to stay on my feet because if I stopped I might not be able to go on. I could hear the bloodhounds on my trail. My baby and I were running for dear life. I was already cold and tired and nearly collapsing. The thought of being found and sold kept me going.

I came through the woods and looked up, and there was the river. One part of my journey was behind me.

I jumped from one icy block to the next as quickly as I could. It was so slippery that I fell in the water at one time and just barely kept my baby above water.

We were crossing the river with icy blocks running into me, but I had to keep going. As I stepped into the cold, icy river I was panic stricken.

When I got closer a man helped me out of the river.

He was a slave owner who was moved by my ordeal and helped me out. I was the happiest ex-slave you have ever seen. We crossed the river.

Free! We are free!

We rested at the Rev. Rankin's house. They helped us and gave us warm clothing. They were so nice, and then we had to go on. And I had to think about finding my husband and then going back to get my kids that were left behind. Maybe I can help someone else to freedom.

I thank God I made it and I'm free.

by Margaret Guy

The Best And Worst Of Times

The time we live in today has its advantages as well as its disadvantages. High unemployment and the threat of war are just among the few worries of today's society.

We also need to think about the threat of AIDS and other infectious diseases plaguing our times. Divorce is at an all time high, and our young people are resorting to gangs as a place to call their family. The use of drugs and alcohol is also threatening our streets.

Pornography is in our books and magazines and all over our televisions. Crime is on a rampage. There are many disadvantages of our times we live in today.

We also have many things to be thankful for today. Just to mention a few...we know more today than we've ever known before. We are closer to a cure for cancer. We are living longer, healthier lives. We have a better understanding of space. These are just to name a small fraction of the advantages of today's times. As with any time, there will be good and bad, so we should be glad in it.

by Mary Korbel

What Makes A Good Leader?

What makes a good leader? I believe a good leader is someone who people can look up to. A good leader is someone who is not afraid of criticism, because a leader will always have someone who is trying to say they can do a better job. I believe a leader must have a lot of good qualities, because they will run into many different problems that they will have to solve. They must be willing to listen to other people's opinions and take them into consideration. If they don't listen to other opinions, then the people would not follow them. Therefore, they would not be a leader, so a good leader must also be a good listener.

I remember when I was younger I was in the Boy Scouts, and my troop leader was also a policeman. He was someone you could look up to not only as a leader, but also as a friend. He had all qualities of a good leader. He was very easy to talk to if you ever had a problem. He always seemed to have the right answers, and he always took charge when he needed to. Once on a camping trip, one of the boys was hurt and he came to help him, but he also turned it into a learning experience for the rest of us. Later by the campfire we talked about the accident and what we could have done to prevent it. He was always willing to help someone become a better person. He was probably the best example of a leader I can remember in my life.

I feel that in order to become a good leader you must also be a strong-willed person with the idea of being a leader in order to help yourself and others. But most of all you must be able to listen.

by Richard Lotts

A City I Will Never Forget!

One of the nicest cities in Viet Nam is Dalat. Dalat City belongs to Lam Vien Highland. Dalat was named by the French. Its weather is cool all year round, and many kinds of flowers make Dalat look beautiful.

Two famous waterfalls are Camly and Freak. They attract millions of people each year. Ho Xuan Huong Lake and Supermarket are right at the center of Dalat. There, people spend their free time every weekend night.

Next to the Ho Xuan Houng Lake is Doicu. Doicu is a small hill with a lot of evergreen trees. There you can go camping or ride a horse. From Doicu you can walk to Bich Cau Park. Here, people collect many kinds of flowers. They feed and observe birds and many animals.

Dalat City is special to me because I grew up there. My family of six moved there when I was twelve years old. Every weekend my brother, Doan and I walked around the lake, flew kites, visited Doicu, and went to the HoaBinh Cinema.

Dalat people are very nice. I am sure if you, or any tourist, comes to Dalat, you will never forget it!

by Ruan Luong

I Wonder Why

I wonder why human beings have two lungs but only one heart, two eyes but only one mouth, two shoulders but only one neck, two feet but only one body, and two ears but only one head. If I had two heads, I could sleep with one and stay awake with the other. I would also like to have two mouths. I could eat with one mouth while talking with the other. I also would like to have two faces, one in front and one behind, so I could look at all those pretty women on the street both going and coming. I wish I had two brains; I could think with one and let the other one rest. I'm tired of trying to figure out how to get ahead in this world. I have thought so much with one brain that it is about worn out. So I need a rest now. All this talk about two of everything makes me think of getting two more beers, so I can really have a good night's sleep.

by Lee Phouc Nguyen

Learning about Bill Clinton

I used to travel abroad once a year. I visited many countries, including several times to the U.S.A. I am Japanese. I did not grow up in this country. I entered the U.S.A. to stay last August.

The first big surprising topic was Princess Diana's depressing news. And then the next was President Clinton. I have never paid special attention to the government of the U.S.A., except some historical Presidents. But I believe that President Clinton is a great politician in this generation. So I was very interested in the news of his scandal.

I tried to learn about President Clinton's background. Bill Clinton was born on August 19th, 1946, in a farming community at the juncture of Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas. His father, a traveling salesman, died a few months after his birth. When he was four years old, his mother, Virginia Blythe, married Roger Clinton, a car dealer.

While Bill was in elementary school, he excelled both in academics and extra curricular activities. When he was ten years old, his half brother was born and he frequently volunteered to look after him. His stepfather was an alcoholic and he sometimes did unacceptable activities to his wife. His parents divorced and remarried three months later, then he legally adopted his stepfather's surname in his mid teens.

In spite of the sometimes violent atmosphere at home, he earned top grades at the high school and also devoted time to music. His leadership skills were apparent and he served as president for two clubs, one an honor society. He had decided to be a politician before his senior year in high school. He chose this after meeting with President John F. Kennedy in July 1963, just 4 months before Kennedy was assassinated.

Clinton entered Georgetown University in Washington D.C. During his freshman and sophomore years he served as class president. In his senior year, he volunteered to assist relief workers of Martin Luther King Jr. Clinton graduated from Georgetown with a bachelor's degree, and then he began a two-year graduate program at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. After one year, he received a draft deferrment. He came back to the U.S.A. and then enrolled at the University of Arkansas Law School. But he changed his mind and he soon returned to Oxford. He gave up a third year at Oxford and then attended Yale University. Next year, he met Hillary Rodham at Yale and married her on October 11, 1975. (My wedding is same day!)

After graduation from Yale, he ran as a Democratic candidate for the House seat of Arkansas's Third Congressional District. In 1978, at the age of thirty-two, Clinton was elected the youngest governor of Arkansas. Clinton was defeated in his second election. His political ambition took over state business, but he returned to government office in 1982. While he was a governor, he worked very hard, cooperated with the other states' governors and chaired many Democratic organizations.

By the time Clinton felt ready to be a candidate for the Democratic nomination for President, he was in trouble with damaging rumors, the factor was Gennifer Flowers. Clinton and his wife Hillary requested voters to respect "a zone of privacy" on a TV show, and he recovered his candidacy. On January 20, 1993, he was sworn in as the forty-second President. Then he tried to concentrate domestic issues. He was reelected in 1996 and continued to work for America. I was very interested in this story.

I felt very sorry for him about his family condition. But he continued studying very, very hard, and remembered to enjoy his hobby. I think he is very independent and has been since he was a child from all these stories. I think I can understand why he likes Lincoln.

As for the scandals of Clinton, I cannot guess anything about how this trouble is solved by government and the public. President is a kind of symbol of each country, almost the same position as the Emperor. I heard his job as a politician is good. He could win the election for a second term even though there were questions about "Whitewater" too.

Once, the Japanese prime minister was forced to resign by a nasty scandal several years ago. It was not only an affair but also a stingy story. His work term was only about 3 months. It is a rule of the Japanese Diet.

Every country has different laws. So it is difficult and impossible to criticise a type of government. But I married an American and I will live in this country forever. I hope to become an American. I am very curious about this news.

Reference: 1994 CURRENT BIOGRAPHY YEARBOOK

by Shoko Morton

The House On The Hill

There was a very old house on the top of the hill at the end of the city. The house was built in the 1800s by a man named Mr. Miller. Mr. Miller built the house on the top of old Stoney Hill. Stoney Hill is a very high hill that looks down on the city of Salty Lake. There is only one road to the top of the hill to the house. The road was named after Mr. Miller's wife, Ann. River Ann Road is a two-way road, up and down the hill.

In 1831, Mrs. Miller was killed on River Ann Road, coming home from Salty Lake City. Ann Miller worked at a bar in the city where she served drinks. As usual, Mrs. Miller started to walk home like she had for the last two years, but she did not make it this time. A man followed Ann until she started up River Ann Road where she was killed with a knife. She was stabbed ten times and her money was taken.

Mr. Miller waited for Ann to come home that night, but she did not make it. The next day at day-light Mr. Miller started down the hill to the city to look for his wife. He didn't have to go very far. He walked down River Ann Road, and at the end of the road he found something on the side of the road that looked like a dead dog. So he walked closer to it and saw it was Ann. Mr. Miller went down to his knees at Ann's side. He told Ann that he loved her and picked her up and took her to the house. He put his wife in the bedroom on their bed. He gave her a kiss and left to go to the city to find the person that killed his wife.

Mr. Miller stopped at the site where he found Mrs. Miller and looked all around for something to tell him what had happened to his wife. Mr. Miller looked for an hour before he found a piece of black hair on a rock by the side where Ann's head was. It wasn't Ann's hair as her hair was brown.

Mr. Miller went back to the house with the piece of black hair. He sat down at the table with a cup of hot tea, looking at the piece of black hair. He started to make a list of people he knew who had black hair. Then he stopped and walked upstairs to the bedroom to look at his wife for clues. He looked all over her and found some skin and blood under her finger nail. So, she must have scratched somebody. Looking more closely at her finger nail, he found a piece of small black hair. It looked like the piece of the hair he had found on the side of the road on River Ann Road where he had found his wife dead. So now,

Mr. Miller had the black hair and the skin and blood as his first two clues.

Mr. Miller went back down the hill to the site where he found Mrs. Miller and looked around some more. When he got to the site, he looked around again. He did not find anymore clues so he started to walk to the city. On the way, Mr. Miller ran into Mr. Blue. He asked Mr. Blue if he had seen or heard anything. Mr. Blue said that he had seen a man with black hair walk down River Ann Road, going back to the city the night before around 2:00 a.m. Mr. Miller then asked Mr. Blue if the man had a scratch on his face. Mr. Blue replied: "Yes, how did you know?"

"I think that man killed my wife last night!"

Mr. Blue said, "Your wife is dead?"

"Yes," said Mr. Miller.

"Do you need help to find the man that killed your wife?"

"If you have time to help me, I would like your help," answered Mr. Miller.

So the two men started to walk to the city. On the way, they talked about the night before and all the clues they had so far. The men decided to start looking for clues at the bar where Ann had worked. But before they went to the bar, the men stopped at the diner to eat lunch. They sat down to toasted cheese sandwiches, chicken soup, and a cup of coffee. As Mr. Blue got up to pay the bill, he saw the man he had seen last night on River Ann Road. He had short black hair, was 6 feet tall and weighed about 200 pounds. The man was wearing blue pants and a red and white shirt. Mr. Blue sat back down at the table. Mr. Miller said, "What is wrong? You look like you have seen a ghost."

Mr. Blue said, "That is the man I saw last night on River Ann Road."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, that is the man who has a scratch on his face."

The two men wanted to be sure that they were right. So, Mr. Miller and Mr. Blue sat at the table until the man left the diner. They followed the man to the bar where Ann worked. The man sat down at the bar to have a drink. Mr. Miller walked up to the man and sat next to him at the bar and Mr. Blue sat next to Mr. Miller. The bar maid came up and said, "Hi, Mr. Miller, how is Ann?"

"Ann is not feeling good, so she will not be in tonight."

Mr. Blue whispered to Mr. Miller, "What are you doing?"

"You will see," Mr. Miller said and started to talk to the man with the black hair. He told the man how he had found a woman on the side of the road who had been stabbed. He also told the man that the woman was alive and that he had taken her to the house on top of Stoney Hill and called the doctor.

Then the man told Mr. Miller how he was in jail and that he just got out two days ago. He also said that he did not have money and he needed a job, so if he knew of any job would he let him know. Mr. Miller said, "O.K." and finished his drink.

The two men left the bar. As they walked, Mr. Blue asked Mr. Miller why he had talked to that man, as that man supposedly had killed his wife. Mr. Miller said, "We need more clues to prove he killed my wife. Hopefully, he will come to the house tonight to finish off Mrs. Miller."

So the men walked to the sheriff's office and told the sheriff. After the sheriff knew Mr. Miller's plan, the three men walked up the hill to the house where Mrs. Miller was. They waited until the man came back to finish off Mrs. Miller. It did not take too long before they saw a light coming up the hill toward the house. "It must be the man from the bar," said Mr. Blue. The three men hid so they were not seen. The light kept coming closer and closer to the house until it got in front of the house and stopped. The light went off two minutes later, and the door of the house opened.

Someone walked into the house and just then something mysterious happened. A green light came out of the bedroom where Mrs. Miller was, and the light started to move to the steps. So the men watched, not knowing what to think. The green light lit up the room and the man saw that it was the ghost of Mrs. Miller. The light moved up to the man and said, "Why did you kill me? Why?"

The man turned white and grabbed his chest and died of a heart attack. Then the green light was gone.

The three men came out of the darkness, looked at each other and Mr. Blue said, "Did you see that? It was the ghost of Mrs. Miller coming back to get the man who killed her."

Now once a year on the day that Mrs. Miller was killed, you can see a green light in the house.

by Dale D. Sherman

No Spiritual Charm

Why do people fight and cause harm?
No spiritual charm, no spiritual charm.
Just physical violence, hurt, and harm.
No spiritual charm, no spiritual charm.
Just par for my love ones.
No spiritual charm, no spiritual charm.
Just pain and violence and physical harm…
Could it be your child or maybe your loved ones?
No spiritual charm, no spiritual charm.
Nothing but violence and pain for my love ones.
No spiritual charm, no spiritual charm.
No kind of charm at all--just pain and violence.
No spiritual charm--none at all.
Nothing but pain and physical harm
to someone just physical harm
to somebody's child.
No spiritual charm -- no none at all
to my child or somebody's loved one.

by Marietta C. Teague

Books Change Lives

I came from a home where there were no books, no understanding of books and no use for books because nobody could read. My five siblings and I graduated from high school without being functionally literate. I did not learn to read well until I became a student at the Literacy Connection, a program for adult non-readers, at the Mansfield Public Library. After working with a tutor for three years, I began to attend The Ohio State University, Mansfield Campus, where I am studying Liberal Arts. Today, I am the only one of my six sisters and brothers who can read.

I was determined that my children would not be like me. I was able to help my oldest daughter with her homework until she reached the end of third grade. After that, I had to hire a tutor. By sixth grade, my daughter was helping me and her grandfather read and manage our bills.

I knew that education was important, but I still did not realize and understand that knowledge comes from books. The older my daughter got, the more it dawned on me that books are a necessity.

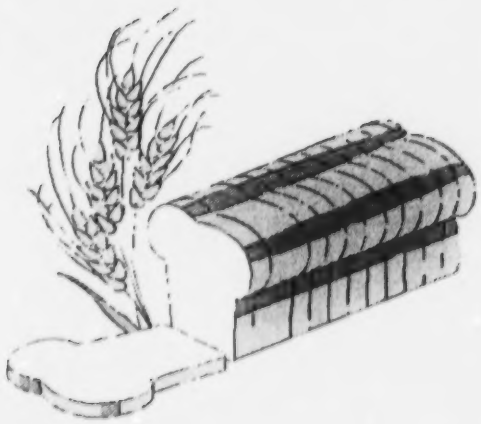
I paid a tutor to educate my oldest daughter. I did not provide her with a reading environment. After I learned the importance of books, I made sure that my younger children had lots of books in the house and that we read with them. My youngest daughter demands that we read to her. I know that there is a difference when books are at hand.

There was a time in my life when I could not have written this. I learned to read, and I am struggling in college. My oldest daughter struggled to learn to read and is doing well in college. The baby doesn't have to struggle at all.

Books do make a difference in lifelong learning.

by Mary Williams

Life



Yesterday!

Yesterday is gone.
It will never be again.
Don't worry about the criticism
That you get from your friends.

Just have faith in God.
Let His love, abide within.
God is the only one
Who can cleanse you from your sins.

Chorus

Everyday of your life
You gonna face many sorrows -
Right now is the day;
Don't put off today for tomorrow.

Don't you trouble yourself
Over the problems of yesterday.
Trying to solve yesterday's problems
Won't make today's problems fade away.

Why worry yourself over yesterday
Since it has come and gone?
Why won't you make up your mind
To leave yesterday's problems alone?

Repeat chorus:

There's not one moment of tomorrow
That anyone of us can borrow
There ain't no way
We can face tomorrow's problems today!

We can't go back in time,
Nor erase our mistakes
To ease our troubled minds.
We can't erase the hurt that we might have caused.

Repeat chorus:

God is the only one who we can confide in.
He's able to wash away all of our sins.
Time we can't control.
Where death is, no one knows!

If you don't want the hurt to last
Don't bring up the past
Because it doesn't make sense-
No, it doesn't make any sense at all.

Repeat chorus

by Mr. Fred Chenault

I

I, Alvoya Johnson, can remember an event that happened to me in my childhood days. One day I was walking to school, and when I got there, these girls were standing in front of the building. They said "Ooo, I seen you get out of that man's car."

I said, "No, you didn't--I walked to school." What had happened was I walked past this car and the man was letting his little girl out of the car. The two girls were standing a long ways away, so they really couldn't see. So they went back and told my foster mother. When I got home, she said, "Was you in a car with a man?"

I said, "No."

Then she said, "If you don't tell me the truth, I will beat you."

I was still saying, "No, I didn't. I walked to school."

So then she said, "I am going to beat you because you are lying to me." So in order not to get a beating I told her yes I was in the car, but I wasn't. I was just saying that so I would not get beat. She beat me anyway. Then she asks me, "Did the guy rape me?" I told her no. Then she said tell the truth. I was scared to death. I then said, "Yes, he did," but nothing like that ever happened.

So then the next day when I was in school, she had the police come up there. They had me put on this funny-looking hat to disguise myself. Then they took me driving around saying, "Where did he take you?"

I said, "To a garage."

They said, "Can you show us?"

I said, "Yes." So we came up to this old garage and I said, "That's it." So they looked inside and then they asked me what was in it. I told them some leaves because that was all I knew that would be in a garage, and I told them that it was dirty.

They never found anything or anybody, but I know that the truth was there was never anyone. So that's what happened.

by Alvoya Johnson

You're Never Too Old to Learn

When I was a child I did not get to go to school much because my mother was often sick and I had to help out. She died when I was thirteen, and I went to live with an aunt and uncle. I was able to get in one more year of school and then quit and went to work at age fourteen.

I married at age sixteen in 1950, and three years later started my own family. I always had a dream of going back to school one day. I was divorced and became a single parent, and things really were tough. I was in an abusive marriage for almost 37 years and financially did not know how I would raise my children. I started having children in 1953 and had six children. I still wanted to go back to school myself and couldn't, but I got all of my children to graduate from high school. Because I did not have an education, things were really tough. I took in boarders and did baby-sitting for a living. In spite of the hardships, I made sure my children finished their education. Some went on to college and other kinds of training.

In 1981, I decided to try to get an education for myself, and I went to be tested to see where I was in my grade level. The gentleman who tested me gave me a list of words, and when I did not know all the words, he said it wouldn't do me any good to come back to school because at my age I might as well forget it. I was discouraged. I went home and cried.

I knew I was not stupid, so a few months later I went to Eastland to be tested again. The lady that tested me there said she thought I had dyslexia. Again for the second time I was discouraged and gave up for several years.

I started to experience health problems that stopped me from working at home. So I decided to try to go back to school one more time. I returned to North High School in September of 1994. I enrolled in the PALS program and hoped that the use of computers would increase my skills. I found myself at age sixty going back to school to try again to get an education. I would like to help some of the other 90,000 people in Franklin County who need literacy help. I would like to be able to help others who find themselves in this situation and not have them wait as long as I did to get an education.

The brain is the greatest gift God ever gave us to use. When I decided to go back to school my grandson said, "Grandma, why are you going back to school? You can take my place in school, I don't like it." So I said, "Son, my father had an old saying, 'You don't miss the water till the well goes dry'. You may find yourself someday where I am and you may not get to go back..." He did quit school and went to work. I hope he gets his GED. My heart aches for him.

I always thought 8 was my lucky number. I hope to get my GED in 1998. I feel I have come a long way in the last two years. Carole, my teacher, has been a lot of help to me. I can read and spell better than I ever did. I wish I could go back to the gentleman at B.V.R. who said forget it and say look at me now.

If you know anyone who needs help in schooling, please invite them to come for a day to school with you. No mountain is too high to climb with an education. You can go to the top of the peak. But, if you don't get an education you will never know if you could have made it or not. You know I even love the smell of this old school.

by Georgia Dickerson

My Time

In the 1920s and 1930s it was not like living in 1998. Seventy-six years ago we lived so much different than we do today.

We lived in the country on a farm. We didn't have things like we do today to work in our fields with, like tractors. We did it with our horses and plows.

Back then, we didn't have cars, electric lights, refrigerators, washers, dryers, toasters, dishwashers, microwaves, vacuum cleaners, T.V., or radio. We washed our clothes on a rub board and pinned them on a line in the sun. We didn't have running water. We had to pump our water or get water out of a well. Sometimes we would have to tote our water from a well, on wash days.

We used to put water in wash tubs and put it out in the sun, to let it get warm. Then we could take a bath in it.

We didn't have indoor bathrooms. We didn't have toothbrushes or toothpaste. We cleaned our teeth with soda. We had a wood-burning stove to cook on.

We didn't have very much in our house. I remember we didn't have very much money. We would put our milk in a bucket in a well to keep it cold.

We would go down to Horse Shoe Bay and get fish and salt them down. Then we put the fish in a wooden barrel.

Most of the time Dad didn't have any money to get us children anything for Christmas. Mom would always cook a big Christmas dinner. That is one thing we always had, food and love, from Mom and Dad.

When Dad had a little money, he would get penny candy, apples, or oranges and nuts. They put it in our sock for Christmas. We made things for Christmas. We would go to the fields to get our Christmas tree. It would be a holly tree, with red holly berries on it. Us kids would make things to put on the tree, like paper chains.

We didn't get very much for Christmas. But they showed their love to us. That is why I love them. They taught us how to trust God and how to put him first in our life.

Our Dad would read the Bible to all of us. They prayed with us every day. They taught us how to give our heart to the

Lord. When I was growing up, we had to stay out of school a lot and work in the in the fields. We would stay home two days and go to school two. That is why I didn't make it at school.

In 1965, I tried to go back to school, but my husband got sick. He was in hospitals, off and on, about two years. My older son Gene, had finished school at that time. I had three boys in school. Gene left home and got married.

I had to find a job with all of that going on. I just couldn't keep up with my school work, so I quit school.

Many years later, in 1992, my sister Virdy was reading in the newspaper one day. It said that people had a chance to go back to school if they wanted to. In 1992, I made up my mind to do something for myself. I have always wanted to know how to read.

At the age of 70, I met Mary Anne, at the library here in Mansfield, Ohio. She has played an important part in my learning to read. It has opened a new world to me.

She will never know how much I thank her.

by Lois Dasher

A Trip to Somewhere Else

It's an early summer morning in this average American city. The sun has not yet spread its brilliance over the concrete and steel structures that are the landmarks of my home. This is my territory, my environment. It is as important to my being as the air I breathe. I accept this city although it is often cruel, indifferent, and terminal in its judgment. But today I leave it to go somewhere else.

I try to move quickly and directly toward my destination. Time is essential. Unfortunately and to my distress, there are many obstacles in my path. There is so much clutter and trash that it seems to be indigenous to this urban landscape. The scenery is decorated by confetti, broken glass, fallen debris and fallen warriors, battled-scarred soldiers who have suffered the indignities of society, whose armor has been dented by a thousand defeats and has been annointed with the strong scent of urine. They have attached themselves to doorways and steel exhaust pipes that have been designed by some architectural wizard to extrude from the ground. How can I get around them? I cannot.

This is my journey, my time to escape. Time is of the essence. I must pass over these obstacles regardless of their repulsiveness, regardless of any danger they might represent. Time is essential. If I am late, there will be no escape. I run swiftly to remove myself from their presence. Yet their very existence weighs heavily upon my conscience. They are my people; who am I but one of them?

Almost exhausted, I approach the terminal of my destination. I can see the image of the grey dog and its background of red, white, and blue pasted on a building that should have been replaced 20 years ago. I have arrived. I have my ticket in hand, and there are no more obstacles to overcome. Or so I think.

A handful of men is standing between me and the freedom I so desperately want. The strong stench of urine has returned to invade my sense of security. The fallen warriors have risen. Their glazed red eyes tell all the stories that I don't want to hear or am afraid to hear. They do not speak, but in silence ask the question, "Where are you going brother?"

I answer them in the same silent manner, "I'm going on a trip to somewhere else."

by William Hughes

Coming to America

I came to Columbus from China in 1948. I remember the first time I arrived in this strange country. I felt so lonely that I dreamed an airplane would take me back to China. I cried every day. I missed my mother and all my good friends. I can't speak English and can't go out by myself...just like a dumb and deaf mute person. That kind of depressed my inmost heart. I cannot find a suitable word to describe it.

My husband and I lived with a Chinese friend. One day an American came to knock the door. My friend answered her "yes." Later she was shaking her head and said "no." I was so envious of her. I asked myself when can I understand and speak English like her. From that time I was determined to start learning English, but my son was just born also.

We had a laundry business. I could not go to school to learn English. One day I met an elderly American lady on the bus. She talked to me a lot. I did not understand at all, I just smiled to her, but she thought I knew what she said. Later she found out I never learned English. Then she bought an old McGuffy schoolbook for me. Every week she stopped at my laundry and taught me English from that book. I studied by myself while I worked. I put the book against the wall between the ironing board and the wall. If some word I didn't know, then I asked my husband. Sometimes he had a good mood that he answered me. Otherwise he kept quiet.

When the laundry mat opened a lot, it made our laundry business go downhill. We were hardly able to make a living. Then we changed to do a grocery business. In beginning we only had American food. Gradually I added different countries' foods. We were the first Oriental grocery in the town. I did not have experience at all. It was more risky than to gamble, especially since my English was so poor.

One day, I saw that lady who taught me English. She was in the Lazarus fifth floor. They had a big room for shoppers to rest. She held my hand to introduce everyone to me. She said "This is a young lady who I told you about. I taught her the McGuffy book. Now she owns a ten countries' food grocery." I saw her face showed very happy. It seems she had done a big accomplishment. When I remember what she said to her friends I can not hold in my laughing.

Wow! The McGuffy book was so helpful to me.

by Jan Jay

Who Am I?

I wake up every morning, and I wonder…
Who am I ?

I am a daughter, a sister, a mother, and my family's provider. Then I look into the mirror and I ask myself...
Who am I ?

I look into my children's little faces to see if I can identify myself, and so I ask myself…
Who am I ?

No matter how hard I struggle and try to be all of the above, no matter how hard I fight for my dignity, I ask myself…
Who am I?

I respect those people who respect me. I take care of my responsibilities. No matter how lonely I get, I ask myself…
Who am I?

Overall I try to be all of the above, and I tell myself that I am a strong woman. I will be all that I can be, the best of whatever I am.

by Michelle Lavender

Male Unknown

Here comes a kid
I've never seen before.
He's walking through
the classroom door.
An earring he wears
in his lip.
I hear today
that's very hip.
I don't get it;
maybe I'm not cool.
I guess that's why,
I'm here at school.

by Johnna Hines

One Year Living in America

This last year has been very special for me--one year living in America.

I was extraordinarily sensitive to cold when I came to Dayton. That cold was from being unfamiliar and feeling strange. I couldn't hear and speak English, so I couldn't understand others and I couldn't communicate.

Americans, their looks and food and culture and history, are very different from ours. I must pay attention to the food smells from my mouth whenever I go out, because our spices are very strong and very strange to Americans. I didn't know how to operate the gas pump in a gas station. And I broke into a sweat to take out money from a cash machine. I was so surprised when I saw a lot of items in the grocery store; I didn't know what to choose, how to choose. Another trouble was units, weight, length, temperature, distance. The units that we use are different from Americans' units, so I got confused and converted into our units. Also, I had to learn the American monetary units. At first, because I got confused using coins, I only used paper money, so I always had a lot of coins in my purse. I had a lot of things to learn. That was like an assignment for me to solve.

Through travelling to many places, I have learned that the world is so wide and varied. I can't forget the majestic Grand Canyon and the endlessly opened Mojave Desert, and the beautiful Niagara Falls. Those were big surprises which I had not experienced.

Spending many holidays--St. Patrick's Day, Easter, Independence Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas--and being associated with so many people, I've gotten familiar with American culture and Americans.

Particularly joining Full Circle was very helpful and interesting for my family. Full Circle is a family program. My tutor, Anne, visits my home to teach me and my kids, I attend parents' group meeting once a week, and there I can meet friends from many other countries. That is very interesting. Sometimes we cook, we discuss important subjects, we read books, and we have parties also. My tutor helps me not only learning English but also living in this country. She can always

understand my English the best. She said that I can understand your words from the heart. We shopped, watched movies, had dinners and talked about music and poems together. She sometimes makes me surprised and happy. She is always fun to be with. She is a very smart and warm-hearted and pretty woman. She is a very good teacher and my best American friend.

Another tutor of mine, Mrs. Ferne Neeb, acts like my mother. She is seventy-two years old, but she is very innocent like a child. She is very kind and thoughtful. I love her voice and her artistic handwriting and her big heart.

I have two children, one boy and one girl. My son, Moon Sung, is in fourth grade, and my daughter, Moon Young, is in second grade. The first day of school, I worried whether they would enjoy school or not. But after school when I saw my children's bright faces I was happy and my mind was set at ease. They talked about so many things: their teachers, their friends, the school building, the yellow bus, the bus driver.

Moon Young talked about her classmate, Megan, who has brown hair and looks pretty. She is very kind and she always helps Moon Young with everything. Her teacher, Mrs. Domensky, was very kind to her, and other kids are kind to her too. The other children have blonde hair and brown hair and white faces. My daughter is not white, and she does not have blonde hair. She said that they are prettier than she is. I said that's OK, you are enough pretty. I think you are the prettiest girl in the world.

My children made friends. They love their teachers, and they are enjoying school very much. They are learning English very well. I think my children have had new experiences in their own way. They are enjoying living in America too. I had a job when I was in Korea, so I couldn't share much time with my family, but now I don't have a job. Most of all, I like to be with my family most of the time.

I love the bright smiles and laughing sounds of people. I was impressed with the kindness of Americans. They always say "thank you," "sorry," "hello," and "excuse me." This is very impressive to me. I love it.

Once, when my friends and I had a small car crash, some people passing in a car stopped and called the police and helped and comforted us. They behaved as if they had that accident.

And my husband lost his electronic memo book in an airplane. After two weeks he received it by mail. He yelled, "America is a very good country!" The electronic memo book is very important for him because he puts everything in it. Northwest Airlines sent it to him.

I admire the educational system and the infrastructure of American society. I have realized that America has a much more developed system and modernized culture. I have tried to think what's the reason why Americans have been able to make marvelous progress in a couple of centuries although my country has several thousand years of history. I want to learn more about America and its history.

Now I have found common points from Americans. Their feelings and morals and basic good sense are the same for the most part as ours. My English is still very poor, but I've got recourse to saying "pardon me?" when I can't understand others. I think my life in America must be a bonus that God has permitted to me. Thanks to God for giving me a valuable experience, and thanks to warm-hearted Americans. While I stay here, I will live my own life the very best I can.

by Yeon Kyung Jung

My Journey to America

When I was a student living in Saigon in South Vietnam, I had a dream. My dream was to get a scholarship to continue my studies in a U.S. college. But unfortunately for me, when I got a scholarship in 1972, my country was overtaken by the Communists. (North Vietnam followed the Communist policy. South Vietnam followed the Democratic policy.) So my desire was canceled.

In 1963 the U.S. government helped South Vietnam to protect their territory by sending the U.S. forces to Vietnam. The war became stronger day to day. Both soldiers of North and South Vietnam died in the war.

In 1973 the U.S. government signed a treaty with North Vietnam "to settle peace all over the country." After that the U.S. force withdrew from South Vietnam. The Viet Cong (name of North Vietnam) didn't carry on this treaty. They attacked South Vietnam. The South Vietnam government fell to Communism.

The Viet Cong put the ex-soldiers and ex-officers of South Vietnam into prison. My destiny wasn't to escape the risk of my country. I was put in prison one year because I was a technical principal of a school. This school was built with the help of the U.S. government.

Thank God I was sponsored by my brother-in-law. In 1997 the U.S. government permitted my family to immigrate to the U.S. I left my daughter in my country because the immigration law doesn't permit the children above 21 years old to come to the U.S. with their parents. In 1985 my son (born 1977) went by boat from my country. He is now living in the U.S.

In Ohio I'm very happy working in a good job at Tyson-Pierre Foods. Luckily the company organized an ESL course and GED course for the foreigners to continue their studies. I found out in these classes many new things useful for my new life in America.

by Nhen Luong

A Conversation Heard, A Decision Made

In the fall of 1997, I came to the ABLE program, seeking to fulfill a burning desire and longing to finish my education. I was fearful but also hopeful. The teachers were very kind to me and gave me tests and talked to me. When they said they thought I could do this, I was filled with hope and joy. Yes! I thought to myself, I will try very hard!

And now, after a few months of study and progress, because of an overheard conversation, I was thinking of leaving ABLE. Full of doubts, and yes, shame, at what I had heard.

A young woman and her child walked into the classroom. I was sitting alone at a table. She went about her business of speaking with the teacher and her staff. Was she a teacher also? Was she on the staff at ABLE? I didn't know, but it really did not matter if she was, for it was what she said to her child that had an impact on me.

After she completed her business with the staff, she sat down with her child, looked at me, and began to lecture the child. She was concerned about her child's grades and wanted her to do better. At first I paid no attention. A mother worried about a child's grades was a common thing, after all. But then she said "it."

"Do you want to end up like all these people here? ...unable to make something of yourself because you didn't work hard enough?" Then she turned to me and said, "Don't you think I'm right? Will you please tell her she needs to do better, or end up here!"

I simply told the child education was important. Then I went on with my work. Very much disturbed at her words and the old "what will people think?" syndrome kicking in along with feelings of shame, I asked myself, "What in the world am I doing here? What do I hope to accomplish by trying to educate myself so late in life?"

A good teacher had just taught us, "never assume." So, I tried not to as I sat there frozen to my seat, not wanting to participate in any of her conversation. I could not get the exact moment, by the look on her face, when she realized I was one of "them." A student, a dropout, unable to ever better my life. She turned her back and left shortly after.

"Never assume." But what else could I think when with one sweep of her hand she lumped all of the students in the room into one category? Dropouts. How I hate that word--makes it sound like we dropped out of life.

Then emotions set in, and I began to ask myself questions. First, I must say, I felt sorry for the child because she was not teaching her to work harder on her grades. She was teaching her that unless her grades were better, she would end up inferior, like us. This in its own way will teach the child intolerance of others.

But that is not the issue here. The issue is, should I stay with the program? Do I really belong here? Was she right? Is it too late? How can it help me to better myself in life when I'm already too old to get a good job and make a better living? Too late, too late -- the words ran around in my head faster and faster!

Then it happened. A great feeling of anger and frustration bellowed up from the very depths of me and made a statement that for a moment I was afraid I had spoken out loud. A cry of indignation said, "Deliver me from intellectual superiority!" I had my answer. I am a person of worth. I will stay and try to finish. Perhaps there is even something this lady can learn from us, tolerance of others and maybe even kindness.

I know it's never too late to learn, even for your own sake. By example we can even help others who wish to better their own lives. No matter what age you are or what station in life, the children can teach you and we can teach them what we have learned from life. Sometimes we can form lasting friendships between the generations.

So there you have it. I will stay. God willing, I will finish and get my long coveted G.E.D. and then, who knows? Anything can happen if you wait long enough and work hard enough. After all, some things are just meant to be. Never be afraid to try.

by Marlyn Lucrezi

Today I'm Free

Today I'm free!

Free to come and go as I wish.

Free to love myself, as I want to be loved.

Free to breathe and be alive and live my life as I want to live it.

Free to be me, and free to take on new challenges as I feel the need to.

Free to love another, who will love back as he wishes to.

Today I'm free!

Free to make changes, as I see the need to.

by Karen S. Smith

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Let It Go!

If it's tearing you apart,
. . . . . let it go.

If it's getting under your skin,
. . . . . let it go.

If it's controlling your every thought,
. . . . . let it go.

If it's confusing to your mind,
. . . . . let it go.

If it's stressing you out,
. . . . . let it go.

If it's making you sad,
. . . . . let it go.

If it's robbing you of your sleep,
. . . . . let it go.

If it's breaking your heart,
. . . . . let it go.

If it's keeping you from living your life,
. . . . . let it go.

by Karen S. Smith

If

If you think you're beaten, you are.
If you think you dare not, you don't.
If you'd like to win but think you can't,
It's almost for sure you won't.

If you think you're losing, you've lost.
For out in the world we find success begins
With a person's will - it's all in the state of mind.

If you think you're outclassed you are.
You've got to think high to rise.
You have to stay with it in order to win the prize.
Life's battles don't always go to the one with the better plan,
For more often than not, you'll win.

If only you think you can!

Everybody makes mistakes;
Therefore, mistakes are a fact of life.
But most important it's the response to error that counts.
Think about it!

by Tia Woerlin

List of Honorable Mention Authors

The following authors submitted pieces of writing for this conference and for inclusion in the Beginnings book. However, because of the limited number of pieces that could be accepted, not everyone was included. Each of these writers deserves praise for taking the chance and allowing us to read their work. We hope that each of them will submit writing again next year, when, if possible, we will be able to include more authors in this publication and at the conference.

Jowonna Elder
Brenda Cordle
Robbin Pizzoferrato
Leonard R. Moore
Else Coe
Violet Jackson
Georgeanne Britzman
Marcia Lones
Norma Gittinger
Ora Blevins
Donna Osborne
Ava Payne
Saba Britton
Joyce Thomas
Gloria Mayle
Mary Chubb
Tashumbre' Jones
Shelly Grogg
Bonnie Culberson
Vicky McCombs
Mike Swartz
Beatrice Trent
Veronica Butler
Annie Bell
Ana Ciurcel
Ljiljana Panovic
Emilia Twarowski
James Hornbeck
Howaida-a-El Shaheed
Oleksandr Seredenko
Tamaro Flowers
Shawn Daulton
Betty Griffin
Carl Beasley
Connie Eaton
Karen Thomas
Mary L. Garrison
Jo Lane Strohl
Debrina Roddy
Sabriena Bauer
Nancy DaVinci
Lisa Woodrum
Oneda C. Pendleton
Treva James
Kelly Brown
Huda F. Mansour
Myrtle Rizer
Sabrina Laughlin
Darrin Alvey
Pamela Norris
Josette Miner
Tracy Richards
Lottie Ramey
Azra Aziz
William Gerstner
Edith Herning
Noha Chamata
Vladimir Kusmiy
Ilham Naim
Olga Levitska
Qamar Siddiqui
Samia Khalil
Laura Weber
Stan Griffin
Precious Lovato

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If you are interested in reading Beginnings on the OLRC website, just follow these brief directions.

1. Type in the website's address: **http://kent.literacy.edu**
2. Once you are at the website, under the heading OLRC Table of Contents, double click on *OLRC Publications*
3. Once this page appears, you will see a list of possible general topics of publications to go to. The first one is the Beginnings site - double click on it and get ready to read and enjoy some of the best writing by some of Ohio's adult literacy students.

If you are interested in purchasing one or more copies of Beginnings please send $4.00 per copy to:

Ohio Literacy Resource Center
c/o Bryan Bardine
414 White Hall
Kent State University
P.O. Box 5190
Kent, OH 44242-0001

If you have any questions or comments, please call Bryan at 1-800-765-2897, ext. 19.

Teaching Ideas

Using *Beginnings*

Several suggestions for using the writing found in the book ***Beginnings*** follow. We hope that these ideas will encourage you to do more than simply read the forceful pieces of writing contained in the book.

Bryan Bardine
Connie Sapin
Nancy Padak
Ohio Literacy Resource Center
June, 1998

- As you read each piece, make notes about what makes the writing powerful. If you are working in a group, share your ideas with each other. Draw some group conclusions about the things writers can do to add strength and power to their drafts.

- Especially with longer pieces, make similar notes about the most effective parts of the writing. Again, share these ideas with others, and draw some conclusions about the qualities of effective writing.

- As you read each piece, decide who the intended reader or listener is. Share your ideas in a small group. Can you make any generalizations about writing with an audience in mind?

- Use Bleich's heuristic as a way to respond to a particular piece of writing. To do this, think and make written notes about these three questions:

  1. How did this piece affect me?

  2. What did the author do to prompt this reaction? What in my own background prompted the reaction?

  3. What do I think is the most important word (or for longer pieces, sentence or paragraph) in this piece? Why do I think so?

If you are working in a group with others who have also read the particular piece, share your ideas.

- Several of the pieces in this book are character sketches (see pages 3, 9, 11, and 12). Read these as a set. Then analyze them. What do they have in common? How do they differ? What are the qualities of an effective character sketch? You might want to organize your thoughts using a Venn diagram.

- At least two of the pieces in this book are retellings of true events (see pages 55 and 68-69). Read both of these pieces, and then analyze them. What do they have in common? How do they differ? What are the qualities of an effective retelling of a true event? How does a written version differ from retelling in person?

- "Copy change" is a writing activity that involves using another author's framework for your own writing. To do a copy change, you use the other author's general format, but you insert your own ideas. The name poem (p. 2) or the "A friend is..." poem (p. 5) can be used for copy change writing.

- As you read these pieces, think about which ones are personally meaningful to you. Write notes about these reactions in your journal. You might ask yourself questions like, Why do I identify with this writing? What parts of the writing bring to mind my own experiences? If you are part of a group, you may want to share your ideas with others.

Note to teachers: For longer pieces such as short stories (pp. 16-19 and 48-50), try using a Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DR-TA) to help students get practice in predicting, confirming, and looking carefully at texts.

If you are interested in reading *Beginnings* on the OLRC website, just follow these brief directions.

1. Type in the website's address: **http://kent.literacy.edu**
2. Once you are at the website, under the heading OLRC Table of Contents, double click on *OLRC Publications*
3. Once this page appears, you will see a list of possible general topics of publications to go to. The first one is the *Beginnings* site - double click on it and get ready to read and enjoy some of the best writing by some of Ohio's adult literacy students.

THE OHIO LITERACY RESOURCE CENTER IS LOCATED AT KENT STATE UNIVERSITY,
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1-800-765-2897 OR 330-672-2007
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